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TAGS: PGOV PREL PINS KDEM SG
SUBJECT: Senegal: The Misery of Local Democracy

SUMMARY

¶1. (SBU) On October 29, President Abdoulaye Wade fired by decree Mbaye Ndiaye, the Mayor of the Parcilles Assainies suburb of Dakar for mismanagement. Ndiaye who is one of the old guards in the ruling party and a Deputy at the National Assembly has been punished for his loyalty to Macky Sall, the current Chair of the Assembly who has fallen into disfavor with Wade. This is another confirmation of the continuing erosion of Senegalese democracy and underlines the blurred lines between where the party ends and the state begins.

END SUMMARY

No tolerance for dissent

¶2. (SBU) Ndiaye showed an independent streak by voting against the amending of the Constitution just to remove the Chair of the National Assembly. He did not hesitate to criticize his own party for interfering with separation of powers. Ndiaye is a senior ruling party leader who has occupied several strategic positions such as Special Advisor to Wade in charge of the Casamance conflict; Financial Officer of the PDS; Deputy at the National Assembly and Chair of the Defense and Security Committee of the Assembly in 2001 and Mayor of Parcilles in 2002.

The trampling of local democracy

¶3. (SBU) Since his election in 2000, Wade has shown little respect for local democracy. In 2001, he had the Assembly pass a law to dissolve all local governments because they were run by the Socialist Party. In 2002, he organized new elections with the result that members of his party now control most local governments.

The mandate of these officials expired in 2006 but Wade twice, in 2006 and then in 2007, found a pretext to extend their terms to avoid holding elections. In the mean time, he has systematically fired, by decree, local officials belonging to opposition parties, (such as his former Prime Minister Idrissa Seck) or members of his party who disagreed with his policies. The Chairman of the Regional Council of Diourbel was first in 2006 and Ndiaye is now the second.

COMMENT

¶4. (SBU) Wade does not hesitate to violate legal procedures when firing local officials. Local elections are due on March 22, 2009 and preparations are underway at the Ministry of Interior, but nobody can be sure that they will be held. If the context is unfavorable, it is likely that the President will find a way to postpone them again. The next local elections will be crucial for Wade as he will place leaders who will support and work for the successor that he will designate. The recent creation of three new regions, to gerrymander the areas where the opposition could win a significant number of seats, is another source of concern. No effort is currently being taken in regard to issuing new voting cards to the one million voters who need to change their cards as a result of the reshaping of administrative districts.

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